

Why GAO Did This Study

Developing capable Afghan National Army (ANA) forces is a key element of the U.S. and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-led coalition effort to counter the insurgency and create sustainable security in Afghanistan. Since 2002, the United States, with assistance from NATO and other coalition nations, has worked to develop the ANA. The Department of Defense (DOD) leads U.S. efforts to train and equip the ANA. U.S. agencies have allocated about \$20 billion in support of the ANA since 2002 and have requested \$7.5 billion more for fiscal year 2011.

GAO examined (1) the extent of progress made and challenges faced in expanding the size of the ANA, (2) the extent of progress made and challenges faced in developing ANA capability, and (3) how much estimated future funding will be needed to sustain and further grow the ANA. GAO reviewed DOD and NATO documents and met with officials in Washington, D.C.; Tampa, FL; Brussels, Belgium; and Kabul, Afghanistan.

What GAO Recommends

GAO recommends that the Secretary of Defense, in conjunction with international partners, take steps to eliminate the shortage of trainers; clarify what ANA growth beyond the current end goal, if any, is needed; and develop estimates of the future funding needed to further grow and sustain the ANA. DOD concurred with GAO's recommendation regarding trainers. DOD partially concurred with the need to develop growth and cost estimates for the ANA.

View [GAO-11-66](#) or key components. For more information, contact Charles Michael Johnson, Jr. at (202) 512-7331 or johnsoncm@gao.gov.

AFGHANISTAN SECURITY

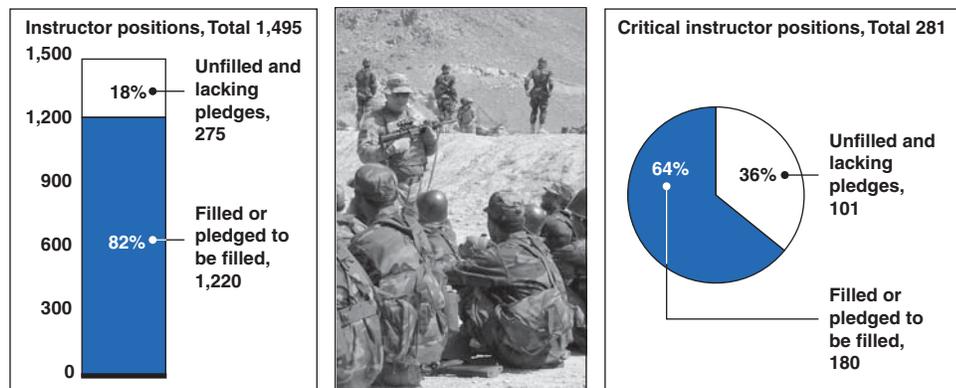
Afghan Army Growing, but Additional Trainers Needed; Long-term Costs Not Determined

What GAO Found

Between January 2010 and July 2010, the ANA grew from 104,000 to 134,000 personnel, reaching the interim growth goal set by the Afghan government and international community 3 months ahead of schedule. Officials cited increased recruitment of new soldiers and higher training capacity as factors that enabled the growth. The ANA has also generally achieved its goal of drawing proportionally from Afghanistan's major ethnic groups, with some key exceptions. However, the ANA faces challenges, including high rates of attrition—the loss of soldiers from the force before they complete their contracts—and absenteeism. In particular, high attrition could impact the ANA's ability to meet its end size goal of 171,600 by October 2011.

The Afghan government and international community have set an objective of having the Afghan army and police lead and conduct security operations in all Afghan provinces by the end of 2014. As of September 2010, no ANA unit was assessed as capable of conducting its mission independent of coalition assistance. About two-thirds were assessed as effective with limited coalition support. Efforts to develop ANA capability have been challenged by difficulties in staffing leadership positions and a shortage of coalition trainers, including a shortfall of approximately 18 percent (275 of 1,495) of the personnel needed to provide instruction at ANA training facilities.

Shortage of Instructors for the ANA, as of November 2010



Sources: GAO analysis of NATO data; GAO (photo).

Neither DOD nor NATO has completed an analysis of ANA sustainment costs. Such analysis is important given that, as of January 2010, the International Monetary Fund projected that it will take until at least 2023 for the Afghan government to raise sufficient revenues to cover its operating expenses, including those related to the army—highlighting Afghanistan's continued dependence on external sources of funding. In addition, DOD and NATO studies indicate that growth of the ANA beyond the current end goal of 171,600 may be needed—potentially up to a force size of 240,000 personnel. Any such growth will necessitate additional donor assistance.